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A N
ANSWER

T O

Mr. BENJAMIN BENNET'S

IRENICUM:

W H E R E I N

The Doctrine of the TRINITY is defended, and the Duty of BELIEVING it enforc'd:

The Necessity of a Divine Illumination declar'd:

The pretended RIGHT of Christians, to chuse what is WRONG, adjust'd:

An Ambiguity in settling FUNDAMENTALS expos'd:

The insolent Charge of IMPOSING and setting up an INQUISITION, answer'd:

And loose Harangues about PEACE, with a Neglect of TRUTH, prov'd to be only the Shuffling of an AUTHOR, and to have no place in an ARGUMENT.

By JOHN ATKINSON, of *Stainton*, in
Westmorland.

MICAH iii. 5. *The Prophets, that make my People ERR, bite with their Teeth, and cry PEACE.*

L O N D O N:

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A N
A N S W E R
T O
Mr. BENJAMIN BENNET'S
I R E N I C U M.

Mr. *Bennet's* First PROPOSITION, is this,



HAT every Man, that has the use of his rational Faculties, and pretends to any Religion, is bound to employ his Thoughts about it, in order to understand its Principles, Doctrines and Rules, Pag. 6.

A N S W E R.

SEEING some hold, that every man may be saved by the Law or Sect which he professeth; and accordingly some trust for Salvation in a meer natural, and deride all reveal'd, Religion; or look upon it as an unnecessary Thing: And seeing some, who pretend to own a divine Revelation, are yet willing to rest in a bare *human* Probability as to the Truth of it, and so have no *divine* Certainty of any Thing reveal'd in it; no, not of the great Object of Worship himself, God the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost; I look upon this Proposition as very imperfect, containing nothing in it, but what a *Jew* or a *Mahometan* may actually perform: And therefore, for the Use of Christians, I add, as a necessary Supplement to it, this great Truth, *That every*

Christian Man is bound to seek and get full Persuasion, Resolution, and Establishment in the Knowledge of the true Religion. For, seeing Religion is true or false, it is absolutely necessary that we *certainly* know what our Religion is, lest we should fall in with those that are of a false Religion, who glorify not the true God, or glorify him not as God.

Now, what is the true Religion? I answer, The Christian Religion alone; that, and no other, is the true Religion. By that, and no other, is the true God glorify'd, and enjoy'd as such. This, and no other Religion, is a Life of Godliness in Christ Jesus our Lord. And therefore, this is the Religion we must not only employ our Thoughts about, in order to understand it, but labour to be *established and confirmed* in it. There must not only be a searching, but an *acknowledging of the Truth, which is after Godliness.* The very Heart must be knit unto all Riches of the full Assurance of Understanding, to the Acknowledgment of the Mystery of God, and of the Father, and of Christ. Every Man is to be fully persuaded in his own Mind, rooted and built up in Christ, and established in the Faith. This is necessary, lest any Man should spoil us through Philosophy and vain Deceit. Upon our Clearness in Religion depends our Constancy in it: For whilst we are dark and doubting, and come to no Certainty, so long we are in Danger of being beguiled, and eternally ruined. That which is halting is quickly turn'd out of the Way. They, that are unstable and wavering, are easily carried about with every wind of Doctrine. Unsettled Souls, such as are ever learning, and never come to the Knowledge of the Truth, are soon seduced. Therefore, nothing is of greater Importance to us, than to be *firmly* establish'd in the Knowledge of the Christian Religion; and have a *Certainty* of the Truth of its Doctrine. Believers may be infallibly certain, (and it is their Sin and Shame if they be not) that the Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testament are the Word of God; and that, as such, they are an infallible Rule of Faith and Obedience. They are infallibly certain, that it is their Duty to believe whatever God in his Word enjoins them to believe, and to do whatever he there commands them to do. *There is no one Thing*, as a learned Dr. says,

says, *we know more certainly, than that there is none other God but one*; and yet Believers may be as certain, that God the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost are that One God. They are certain, that God the Father is a necessary Being, self existent, absolutely eternal, the Most High God: And they are *as certain*, that the Son and the Holy Ghost are both of them the necessary Being, self existent, absolutely eternal, the Most High God, as that God the Father is so; because they are the one and the very same God that he is. O that we may live up to this Certainty! And in every Thought, Word, and Work give God the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost the Glory due to his great Name! Alas! how unbecoming is it, for any Man, much more a Minister of the Gospel, to speak or write any Thing that may abate the Certainty, or obstruct the Increase of Knowledge in these most weighty Points! And yet Mr. Bennet only says, that *some Knowledge of Christ is necessary, in his Offices and Mediation, and of the Paraclete*, p. 6. But surely, not only *some Knowledge of Christ in his Offices and Mediation* is necessary; but *some Knowledge of him in his Nature* also. And not only *some Knowledge of Christ*, and the Holy Spirit, is necessary, but *so much Knowledge as is necessary to convince us*, that we ought to believe in, and worship and obey these Two Persons, lest we believe in we know not whom, and worship and obey we know not what. For such as our inward Sentiments of God are, such will be our internal and external Worship of him. Religion being founded upon Principles of Light and Knowledge in the Mind, such as that Light and Knowledge is, such will our Religion be. If our Knowledge be indistinct, dark and confused, such will our religious Performances be. And therefore I was surpriz'd, that Mr. Bennet, speaking of the Three glorious Persons, should say, p. 97. *'Tis not necessary, that we know particularly their essential absolute Perfections, and their Relations one to another; 'tis enough that we know their Relation to us, and what Offices they sustain, &c.* This appears to me a very dangerous Assertion. What! Is it not necessary to know that God is a necessary, eternal, independent Being? That he is a Being of infinite Wisdom, Power, Holiness, Justice, Goodness and Truth? Is it not necessary to know that the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost

Ghost are the one, true and Most High God? If it be not necessary to know their Relations one to another, then those Scriptures are unnecessary to be known, which hold out to us God the Father as the Father of Christ, and Christ as the proper and only begotten Son of God the Father: Yea, when Christ calls God his Father, and tells us that he and his Father *are One*, 'tis not necessary to know what he means thereby, to wit, whether Christ, as he is one with the Father, is an increased or a created Son. Upon this Notion, that we need not know their Relation one to another, it looks as if the Description of the Believers God, that *he is one God the Father*, is too long by one Half; and that, when are commanded to believe that Jesus is the Son of God, its no matter at all, whether we know him to be *such* a Son of God as is very God, or such a Son as is a meer Creature, or have no Idea at all of *the Son* of God. How can it be enough to know their Relation to us, unless we know what they are in themselves? Can we know that Christ stands in the Relation of a Saviour to us, unless we know that he is able to save? And how can we know that he is able to save, unless we know that he is very God and very Man in One Person? How can we know that the Holy Ghost is or can be the Sanctifier, and Comforter of God's People, unless we know him to be omnipresent, omniscient, omnipotent, and the like? 'Tis certain, God has not only revealed the Relation he stands in to us, in his Word; but his essential absolute Perfections also; And is that part of divine Revelation not necessary to be known? The Lord never did an unnecessary Thing, and yet he hath been pleas'd to make known himself to his People, by declaring to them his infinite Perfections. When God would encourage *Abram* to walk before him, and be perfect, he declares to him his infinite Power, or All-sufficiency; *I am the Almighty God*, says he, *Gen. xvii. 1.* When *Moses* desired to know the Name of God, not only for his own Support and Comfort, but also to satisfy the People of *Israel*, God gives him in a very brief, but full Account, of his absolute Perfections, in these Words, *I am that I am*, *Exod. iii. 14.* When blessed Jesus saw *John*, the Divine, falling at his Feet as dead, he makes known

known to him his Eternity, to revive and cheer him up; *Fear not*, says Christ, *I am the first and the last*, Rev. i. 17. Certainly, it is the Knowledge of God's essential Perfections; such as his Omnipresence, Omniscience, Almighty Power, infinite Justice, and Holiness, and Goodness, and the like, that deters from Sin, quickens unto Piety, and comforts in Time of Affliction; and therefore it is a Knowledge far from being unnecessary.

Mr. Bennet's Second P R O P.

As all are bound to think about Religion, it is impossible they should think alike; but their Thoughts will unavoidably issue in different Sentiments and Opinions, in a great many Particulars relating to the Religion they profess, P. 7.

A N S W E R.

I TAKE Leave to put this Proposition in other Words, thus; *That if all Christians are bound not only to think about, but to be well settled in the Christian Religion, it is possible, yea probable, that they will think alike; that their Thoughts will certainly issue in the very same Sentiments and Opinions, in a great many Particulars, yea, in all fundamental Points relating to the Religion they profess.* This Proposition is grounded upon plain Texts of Scripture; it is true, in Matter of Fact; and it is impossible it should be otherwise.

I. IT is grounded upon such Texts as these, where we are exhorted to *speake the same Thing*, -----and to *be perfectly joined together in the same Mind, and in the same Judgment.* *That we stand fast in one Spirit, with one Mind, striving together for the Faith of the Gospel.* *That we be like minded; and of one Mind.* *Of the same Mind in the Lord.* *That we may, with one Mind and one Mouth, glorify God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.** *The Multitude of them that*

* 1 Cor. i. 10. Phil. i. 27. 2 Cor. xiii. 11. Phil. iv. 2. Rom. xv. 5, 6.

believed were of one Heart, and of one Soul, Acts
iv. 32.

2. THIS Proposition is true in Matter of Fact. True Christians have always been of one Mind in many, yea, in all the great Points of Religion. Innumerable Multitudes, even Thousands upon Thousands, have agreed herein. Many Differences there may be, and often are, in less necessary Points; but in the Substantials of Religion there is a blessed Harmony. *Whatever Doctrine there is, the Knowledge whereof, and Assent whereunto is simply necessary unto Salvation; in this all, who shall be saved, do first or last most unanimously agree.** However, all sincere Christians do agree in all Fundamentals of the Christian Faith; and have a virtual Belief of all the other Points. † And this is evident, from the Harmony of the Confessions of the Faith of the Christian and reformed Churches in all the chief Kingdoms, Nations and Provinces of *Europe*; as you may see in *Corpus Confessionum*. There you have the *Helvetic, French, English, Scotch, Belgic*, and the *Polish* Confessions. There you have the Confession of the four Cities, to wit, of *Strasburg, Constance, Memmingen* and *Sindan*. And there you have the *Augustan, Saxon, Wirtemberg, Palatine, Bohemian* or *Waldensian* Confessions. There is also the Consent, in Faith and Religion, between the Churches of *Greater and Lesser Poland* and *Lithuania*; the *Basil* Confession; and the Confession of *Cyriel*, Patriarch of *Constantinople*, inscrib'd, the Oriental Confession of the Christian Faith. We may take further Notice here, that the latter Confession of *Helvetia* is subscrib'd by all the Ministers of the Churches of Christ therein; as you may see in the End of the Preface to that Confession. ** Hence 'tis manifest an happy Agreement there is in the great Truths of the Gospel by the godly Learned.

* Bp. Reynolds's Works, p. 1070. † Mr. Nathaniel Taylor's Discourse of Faith in Jesus Christ, p. 3. ** Subscripserunt omnes omnium ecclesiarum Christi in Helvetia ministri, qui sunt Tiguri, Bernæ, &c.

3. It is impossible, it should be otherwise. 1. Because God hath promised this unto his People. *I, says God, will give you one Heart and Way*, Jer. xxxii. 39. Ezek. xi. 19. 2. Because Faith is One, Eph. iv. 5. 3. Because the End of the Ministry is to bring to the *Unity of Faith*, Eph. iv. 13. 4. This is what our Saviour prayed for; that his People *might be made perfect in One*, Joh. xvii. 23. 5. Because the Work of God, upon the Hearts of all Believers, is *substantially One*, and the very same. *Conversion, or Regeneration, is the same in every one, without any Difference*, says a judicious Divine.*

The Sum of Mr. Bennet's Third P R O P. is;

THAT it is the undoubted Duty of all Christians to think and judge for themselves in Matters of Religion; and, taking the Scripture for their only Rule, to profess, believe and practise according to the Light and Conviction of their own Minds, p. 9.

EXPLANATION.

AND therefore, that every Man may be an happy Judge in his own Cause, and especially in a Cause of such vast Importance, as the Cause of Religion is, he should consider;

I. *THAT* no Man can think or judge *aright* in Matters of Religion, who is altogether irreligious, or utterly void of all saving Knowledge and Grace. A dark, dead Soul, a Soul under the Power and Dominion of sinful Lusts and Ignorance, cannot discern Truths necessary to Salvation. Nay, the *ψυχὴς ἀνθρώπου*, or Soullly Man; a Man full of his Reason, and rational Argument; a Man given to the Study of Wisdom; a Man eminently furnished with the most excellent Endowments of Nature, and rarely cultivated with all kind of human Learning; yet, whilst he is graceless, he is not only ignorant of, but an Enemy to, God and the Truths of God. Such learned Men as the Apostle speaks of, 1 Cor. i. to wit, *wise Men, Scribes, the Di-*

* Mr. Firmin's Real Christian, p. 17.

sputers of this World, these, not one of them, nor all of them joining their Wit and Wisdom together, can of themselves understand or know the Truths of the Gospel, or receive the Things of the Spirit of God. This the Apostle is express in, 1 Cor. ii. 14. But the natural Man receiveth not the Things of the Spirit of God, for they are Foolishness unto him; neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned. Hence 'tis plain, that a Man of Reason, and well skill'd in the Exercises thereof, while he wants Faith, he cannot attain to a right Apprehension of divine Truths, because they are spiritually discerned. Mr. Polhill says, the Apostle's Conclusion from this Text is, A Man of Reason, with the Gospel before him, cannot receive or know the Things of God. And here I would lay down, against the meer Rationalist, and Despiser of Faith in this Case, this Assertion, That meer Reason, in its greatest Strength and highest Attainments, cannot, by any or all its Arguments, produce in any Man a steadfast divine Belief, that the Holy Scriptures are the Word of God. Or, That, that divine, supernatural Faith, wherewith we are commanded to believe the Scriptures to be the Word of God, neither is, nor can possibly be, the Effect or Product of meer rational Arguments. Without the effectual Illumination of our Minds, by the Holy Ghost, we can never in a due Manner believe the Scriptures to be the Word of God. Bare external, rational Arguments may silence Men, that they cannot say, the Scripture is not the Word of God; nay, farther, they may force a kind of Assent or Acknowledgment, that the Scripture is the Word of God: And so they are of very good Use, and ought to be improv'd as such; but they cannot effect in us a certain divine Faith. There be many Arguments, says a judicious Divine, whereby a Man may be convinced, and forced to acknowledge, that the Holy Scripture is undoubtedly the Word of God: (he mentions six) But, says he, none of all these Arguments can undoubtedly persuade the Heart, certitudine fidei, that the Holy Scripture, or any Doctrine contained in it, is the Word of*

* Precious Faith, p. 22.

God, till we be taught of God, till the Holy Spirit of God have inwardly certified and assured us of it. * Another says, *There are Arguments many and strong to force Men, that they cannot tell how to answer, and to say the Bible is not the Word of God; but no Testimony but of the Spirit will convince them and convert them, so as to say and believe that it is the Word of God. The divine Assent of Faith can be built on nothing but the Authority and Testimony of God. † The Spirit of God, says Dr. Bates, is the alone Instructor of the Spirit of Man in these (Gospel) Mysteries, so as to produce a saving Belief of them. The rational Mind, says he, may discern the literal Sense of the Propositions in the Gospel, and may yield a naked Assent to the Truth of them; but, without supernatural Irradiation by the Spirit of Life, there can be no transforming and saving Knowledge and Belief of them. *** And how ready should we be to receive this great and necessary Truth, if we did but seriously consider;

I. WHAT a dark, corrupt, blind Thing Reason is, without saving Knowledge and Grace; especially in the Things of God. Our Minds are by Nature blinded, and we are not only dark, but *Darkness* it self. We are expressly told, in God's Word, that the carnal Mind is *Enmity* against God; that it is not subject to the Law of God, neither indeed can be. That the God of this World hath blinded the Minds of them which believe not, lest the Light of the glorious Gospel of Christ, who is the Image of God, should shine into them. Unto the Unbelieving is nothing pure, and therefore not the Word of God, but even their Mind and Conscience is defiled. Unto the learned Greeks, preaching Christ crucified was Foolishness. We are not sufficient of our selves to think any Thing as of our selves: Much less are we of our selves able to think our selves into a stedfast divine Belief, that the Scripture is the Word of God. Believers themselves can do nothing without Christ; much less can Unbelievers, by the bare Strength of Reason, learn to believe. Besides, unsanctified Reason is perverse, and re-

* *Hilderham*, on Psalm li. p. 698. † *Caspel's Tentations*, p. 223.
 ** *Works*, p. 139.

olutely bent against Gospel Truths. When Paul disputed in the Synagogue with the *Jews*, certain Philosophers of the *Epicureans*, and of the *Stoicks*, encountered him : And some said, *What will this Babler say ?* Other some, *He seemeth to be a Setter forth of strange Gods ; because he preached unto them Jesus, and the Resurrection.**

2. We should consider, how plain it is from God's Word, that it is *God himself* who enables us to believe and understand the Scripture. He, and He only, assures us that it is his Word. It was the Lord Jesus that *opened the Understandings of his Disciples, that they might understand the Scriptures. †* They had been talking together, of all these Things which had happened. They had been communing and reasoning one with another, of the Things which were come to pass there in those Days, concerning *Jesus of Nazareth*. Yet, after all their Reasoning, they were too slow of Heart to believe all that the Prophets had spoken. Their Hearts were shut against divine Truths, and so are the Hearts of all others, till Christ open them. Holy Flavel's Observation upon this Text is, *That the Opening of the Mind and Heart, effectually to receive the Truths of God, is the peculiar Prerogative and Office of Jesus Christ.*** 'Tis the Lord by his Spirit that teacheth us all Things ; that guides us into all Truth. It is by the *Unction* from the Holy One that Believers know all Things. Hence did David pray, *Open thou mine Eyes, that I may behold wonderful Things out of thy Law*. Hence did the Apostle pray for the *Ephe- sians*, that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of Glory, would give unto them the Spirit of Wisdom and Revelation in the Knowledge of him : And that the Eyes of their Understanding be enlightened, that they might know what is the Hope of his Calling, &c, And to God must we all pray, for Faith, and the Understanding of the Scripture ; for these are the special Gifts of God.

* Acts xvii. 17, 18.
Vol. I. pag. 40.

† Luke xxiv. 45.

** Works,

3. THIS is most agreeable to the Nature of *special, divine, supernatural Faith*. It must needs come immediately from God, or it cannot be such. Divine Faith hath a divine Author; an Almighty Worker. It is wrought in us by the exceeding Greatness of God's mighty Power. But if Faith be the Product of meer Reason, then it is *of our selves, and is not the Gift of God*, contrary to *Eph. ii. 8.* and *Phil. i. 29.* If Faith be the Effect of meer Reason, then either Faith is not Grace, or Reason is Grace, or else the Effect is of another and higher Kind than the Cause is, which is absurd; for nothing can give that which it has not in it self. No Man can expect Grapes from Thorns. The Product will be according to that of which it is produced. If Faith be the Effect of bare Reason, then it stands in the Wisdom of Men, and not in the Power of God, contrary to *1 Cor. ii. 5.* If Faith be the Product of human Reason, then it is but human and fallible: As Dr. Owen proves in that excellent Book of his, *The Reason of Faith*, p. 76, 77, 78. And an human, fallible Faith can rise no higher, than a Probability: Hence it is, that an aged Minister of Christ laments over our younger Brethren, thus; *There is another Thing, says he, which I am sorry I have occasion to mention; and it is this, that there are in this Nation some younger Brethren, who deny that we can have any absolute Certainty of the Truth of our Christian Faith, and hold, that we have no more but a great Probability that our Christian Religion is true; a Probability, cui potest subesse falsum, which may be false for any thing we can know to the contrary.** He goes on to shew the Danger of this Opinion, and says, *The Opinion, that we have no absolute Certainty, but only a great Probability, banisheth all divine Faith, properly so called, out of the Church of Christ.** So that it is not Reason, but the Spirit of God by Faith, that gives us absolute Certainty of the Truth of the Christian Religion. But Mr. Bennet hints, that it is laying aside all Modesty, to bring it in as a sort of an Objection against this Liberty of judging for our selves, that Reason, in its present Weak-

* Mr. Lorimer's Discourses against Deism, Postscript, p. 83.

ness, Darkness and Depravity, is utterly unfit to be a Judge in spiritual Things, in the mysterious and sublime Doctrines of Religion. And will Mr. Benner's Modesty allow him to say, that it is a fit Judge in these Things? Is it Reason, or an higher Gift, whereby some come to know the Mysteries of the Kingdom of Heaven, while others know them not? Hear what Dr. Owen says, *That among all the false and foolish Imaginations, that ever Christian Religion was attack'd or disturbed withal, there never was any, there is none more pernicious than this, That the Mysteries of the Gospel are so exposed unto the common Reason and Understanding of Men, as that they may know them, and comprehend them in an useful Manner, and according to their Duty, without the effectual Aid and Assistance of the Spirit of God.** But Mr. Bennet asks, *Must we receive Religion without judging of it at all?* ANS. No. *If not, must we not judge by such Faculties as we have?* No doubt of it; by the best we have. But natural Faculties, consider'd barely in themselves, are incapable Judges of the Mysteries of God. They must be savingly enlighten'd, and have the special Assistance of the Holy Ghost, before they can pass a right Judgment on divine Things. † *Does not God himself appeal to our Reason, in his Transactions with us?* I think he does not, in those Things that are above the Sphere of Reason. *Is not Reason the very Medium, by which he conveys his Mind and Will to us, in the Revelation he has made to the World?* No: For Reason, of it self, can convey nothing to us that is above Reason. I think the Finger of God, or his blessed Spirit, is the great Medium, by which he conveys the Knowledge of his Mind and Will to us, in the Gospel Revelation. But Mr. Bennet says, *That Reason is the Discerner of our Rule.* I suppose he means the divine Rule, the Word of God. Let Dr. Bates answer this; *When 'tis brought, that is natural Reason, from the narrow Sphere of Things sensible, to contemplate the Immensity of Things spiritual and super-*

* Causes, Ways, &c. p. 10.
pag. 41.

† Flavel's Works, Vol. I.

*natural, its Light declines, and is turned into Darkneſs.**
And I ſuppoſe Darkneſs cannot diſcern Rules.

II. AND hereupon we may conſider, that it is the *regenerate Perſon, the Believer*, and he only, that can think and judge *aright* in Matters of Religion. We muſt have ſpecial, ſupernatural Aſſiſtance, before we can rightly take in ſupernatural Truths, or ſavingly underſtand one Tittle in God's Word. The Eye of our Underſtanding muſt be enlighten'd, the Mind inſtructed and taught of God: The whole Soul furniſhed with a gracious Ability, before we can ſavingly embrace and cloſe in with Goſpel Truths. So that the new Creature in the Soul, aſſiſted by the Spirit of God, is a proper Judge in Matters of Religion. The new Underſtanding, or renewed Mind, diſcerning Things ſpiritually, and by Faith, and actuated or influenc'd by the Holy Ghoſt, certainly judges beſt in Points of Faith. As Reaſon is proper judge in Things of meer Reaſon; ſo Faith is proper Judge in Things of pure Revelation. *He that is ſpiritual judgeth all Things, 1 Cor. ii. 15.*

III. I INFER from the Propoſition, *That every particular Church may admit, or reſuſe to admit; hold in, or caſt out of her Communion whomſoever ſhe pleaſes.* When a Church of Chriſt finds any Perſon, that offers himſelf to her Communion, groſſly ignorant, erroneous, or ſcandalous in his Life and Converſation, ſhe may, ſhe muſt reſuſe ſuch an one. And when any Perſon in the Church errs, or turns Heretick in the Judgment of the Church, or immoral, the Church is in Conſcience oblig'd to caſt out ſuch an one, be he the Paſtor, or any other Member. She muſt reject her Paſtor, as well as any other, when he turns Heretick or wicked. And to deny this Liberty to any Church, is the worſt of Impoſition and Perſecution: For this would be to oblige them to hear on the Lord's Day, which Day ſhould be well redeem'd, what they believe and find, from ſad Experience, is not only inconfiſtent with their Edification and Conſolation; but alſo, what breeds inexpressible Diſturbance and Trouble in their Hearts, and tends directly to their everlaſting Ruin. That Time is cer-

* Works, p. 135.

tainly ill, very ill, spent, that is spent in hearing the Godhead of Christ and the Holy Ghost run down. Can there possibly be a more wicked Imposition or Persecution, than to oblige or force a Congregation to hear such a Minister, as preaches up Christ a meer Creature, when that Congregation verily believes he is the most High God, and depends upon him as such for their Salvation? Can any thing be more perplexing, or discouraging, to a Soul troubled for Sin, than to be oblig'd to hear one, who in preaching, denies that there is any such Thing, as a proper Satisfaction to the Justice of God for the Sins of Men, when he believes there is, and hopes for Comfort thence? This would be, to make Men act against their own Consciences, and inconsistent with their own Light and Understanding; to make Men lay aside and set at nought those very Gospel-Truths they believe necessary to Salvation, and so spend their Time in hearing Error and Lyes. And therefore its necessary to withdraw Communion from such. *To renounce Communion with Hereticks, whose Principles are repugnant to the Christian Faith, is the uncontested Right and Duty of every Christian Society; and it is most absurd and ridiculous, to call the Execution of this Authority, Violence and Persecution:* * says a very judicious Writer. The same great Author says, *It is in the Power of Churches of every Denomination, to refuse Communion with Hereticks, and they have a Right to judge for themselves who are so: Therefore all Churches, who preserve the Orthodox Christian Faith, lie under an indispensable Obligation to exclude Hereticks, and deny to them religious Fellowship; which Duty, if carefully discharged, might very much conduce to the Preservation of the Soundness and Purity of Christian Belief.* †

IV. IT follows from the Proposition, *That every particular Church has a Right to preserve, defend, and propagate what they believe in their Consciences is Truth, by what innocent, spiritual Means they in their Consciences judge best:* And so has every Body of Ministers or People. And then, what an invidious, uncharitable, senseless Cry, was the Cry of Imposition and Persecution

* Modern Arians Unmask'd, p. 26.

† Ibid. p. 31.

against the subscribing Ministers! Did they do any thing in Subscribing, but what they, in their Consciences, judged best? Best, to preserve the greatest and most necessary Truths in the Christian Religion? To call this Imposition and Persecution, is to call Men's Thinking and Judging for themselves, which is every Man's unalienable Right, Imposition and Persecution. But hence it is evident, there are still some in the World, that will call Evil Good, and Good Evil. Surely these faithful Ministers of Christ deserved other Treatment. For was it not owing to that their very *Noble Mind*, under the special Care and Providence of God, that the Dissenters have, in some Measure, regained their dying Credit, in a Matter that laid nearest their Honour of any Thing whatever? Certainly, from that seasonable Subscription, the *Arians*, or New Scheme-Men, received a most shocking Blow. And many, who would have been pedling or huckstering away the great Truths of Salvation, were strangely damp'd, and perfectly baffled by that publick Appearance, for the Truth, of so many godly, learned Men.

To Mr. *Benner's* Fourth P R O P. which is to this Purpose,

THAT all Christians, notwithstanding their Differences in lesser Matters of Religion, ought to avoid all Discords and Schisms, and maintain Unity and Peace among themselves,

I most heartily agree. And sincerely wish it was more in Practice with them all, than it is. O that there was more, far more, Peace and Unity among Professors, than there is! And O that, that Peace and Unity was built upon a right Foundation! And what is it that hinders? Why have we not Peace and Unity? Does any thing more, or so much, hinder this, as the *Errors* and *Hereses* of this Day? Can Christians unite and agree, with those that root up the very Foundation of Christianity? Can they, or ought they, to unite with those, that deny the eternal Deity of Christ, and the Holy Spirit? Or can they look upon this as no Fundamental? What sort of Christians are they that can?

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It is not leſſer Matters that Chriſtians fall out with their Neighbours about. To ſay ſo, is a falſe Cry, and a vile Impoſition upon the common People. The Difference is about Things of the greateſt Moment in all Religion. Some believe, that Chriſt and the Holy Spirit are the ſame God, with God the Father : Others deny it. Some hold, that there are Three Gods, One Supreme, and Two ſubordinate : Others ſay and believe, there is but One God only : And accordingly they differ about the Object of Worſhip. Some believe, that Chriſt has made a proper and full Satisfaction to the offended Juſtice of God : Others believe no ſuch thing. Theſe are ſome of thoſe Things wherein the Difference lies. And how can Perſons, who ſo vaſtly differ in their Judgments, unite and be at Peace one with another ? How can they, who heartily believe Chriſt to be very God, and ſubmit to him as their ſovereign Lord and King, be eaſy and in brotherly Love with thoſe, who ungod him, and dethrone him, and make no more than a meer Creature of him ? What a wicked and traitorous Miniſtry, in the State, muſt that needs be, that would ſuffer their King not only to be treacherouſly ſpoken of, but his very Perſon and Life ſtruck at, and they eaſy and unconcerned ? And ſurely they are no better, but every whit as ill a Miniſtry, in the Churches of Chriſt, who can fit ſtill and ſuffer King Jeſus to be blaſphemed, and, of a Saviour and King, made no Saviour, no King over the Church at all. May a State-Miniſtry hold a peaceable Correſpondence with Rebels, up in Arms againſt their rightful and lawful King ? Surely no : This is their Sin and Shame, and they juſtly deſerve to die for it. And what ! may a Goſpel-Miniſtry amicably confederate with the moſt notorious Enemies of King Jeſus ? Is the Diſhonour of Chriſt, and the Overthrow of his Kingdom, leſs to be regarded, than the Diſhonour and Overthrow of an earthly King, and his Kingdom ? We have lately been alarmed with an horrid Plot, in Favour of a Popiſh Pretender ; but our Lord Jeſus, our great Mediator, bleſſed be his Name for ever ! has, in his kind and merciful Providence towards us, made the Diſcovery of it. And we pray and hope, that he will effectually overthrow that abominable Deſign. But then, let us have a care, that we never

ver speak a lessening Word of the glorious Name or Nature of Christ; lest a worse Thing come, than ever came yet! I mean the Settling of Arianism among us. And if Arianism, which is Atheism-begun, should once settle amongst us, as God, of his infinite Mercy, forbid it should, what can we expect, but every evil Thing to settle with it? What can we think, but that Mahometanism, or rank Atheism, will come in as a Flood upon us? Certainly we run the dreadful Risque of forfeiting our King, our Religion, our Country, our All, by our horrid Blasphemies against Christ and his Holy Spirit. As ever we desire the inexpressible Blessings of a Christian and Protestant King, and of the Christian and Protestant Religion to be continued unto us, let us labour, by all Christian Means, to banish the damnable Doctrine of Arianism from among us.

Mr. Bennet's Fifth P R O P.

THE only possible Way of preserving Unity and Peace among Christians, in their Variety of Opinions and Sentiments, and different Measures of Attainment, is Charity and mutual Forbearance. Or, that mutual Charity is the only possible Expedient and Means of Peace.

A N S W E R.

ONLY possible Expedient? That's a Mistake: Because he himself finds something besides. He says, p. 99. *That Catholicism is the certain and only possible Way of Peace and Union*; and in that Catholicism, he mentions uniting in Fundamentals, as what belongs to the only possible Way of Peace and Union. If mutual Charity is the only possible Way of Peace; then uniting in Fundamentals is not necessary thereto. But if, in order to Peace and Union, we must both unite in Fundamentals, and exercise mutual Charity also, then mutual Charity is not the only possible Expedient and Means of Peace. For my part, I take to this latter Way; that not only mutual Charity, but also, and in the first Place, there ought to be uniting in Fundamentals: For Love cannot be lovely, without Truth. Neither is it a Covenant of Peace, but of War against God,

when Agreement in Fundamentals is excluded. *There can be no Syncretism, or Accommodation, says Bishop REYNOLDS, where the Differences are in Points destructive to the Foundations of Religion, and against the very Essentials of Faith, Worship and Obedience.* * As it is the Truth we must receive in Love; so all those that believe the Truth, and walk according to it, we must, and we can most freely, receive in Love, and live in Union and Peace with them. But, for a clearer Understanding of this and the next Proposition, I shall shew; 1. What true Christian Charity is. 2. To whom it ought to be extended. 3. Say something about Fundamentals.

I. WHAT true Christian Charity, or Evangelical Love, is. I cannot better describe it, than in the Words of the great Dr. Owen: *It is, says he, a Fruit of the Spirit of God, an Effect of Faith, whereby Believers being knit together by the strongest Bonds of Affection, upon the Account of their Interest in one Head, Jesus Christ, and participating of one Spirit, do delight in, value, and esteem each other; and are in a constant Readiness for all those regular Duties, whereby the temporal, spiritual, and eternal Good of one another may be promoted.* † Hence it is evident, that no Unbeliever has any true Charity, or Love, in him at all. He may talk great Things of Charity, and Peace, and Forbearance; but all is an hollow, false, and wicked Cry: For he knows nothing at all, what Christian Charity means. *The Holy Scripture is most plain in this Point, says Mr. HILDERSAM, that no Man hath any true Charity in him, but he only that is truly regenerate.* ‖ And, I think, according to Mr. Bennet, none has this Charity, but such as hold Fundamentals: For, he says, if Persons don't hold the Fundamentals, they are not Christians, p. 50. And, to be sure, they that are no Christians, have no Christian Charity at all. So it is plain, *Deists, Socinians, Arians, as well as all other immoral, wicked Persons, are such as have no Charity at all: And yet, what a Noise do they and their Abettors make about*

* Works, p. 1077.
p. 172, 173.

† Compleat Collection of Sermons,
‖ On Psalm li. p. 604.

Charity, Charity; as if they were the only Men who had put on Charity; yet here is a most charitable Gentleman denies them to have any such Thing. And certainly he is in the right: It is that blessed, lovely Grace, that only true Believers have.

II. To whom Christian Charity ought to be extended. I answer, To all true Christians or Believers. To all the faithful Followers and Disciples of Christ. Or, as Mr. Bennet says in his Sixth Proposition, *This Charity is to take place, and be extended towards all the Members of the Christian Peculium and Church, that retain the Fundamentals of Religion, and appear sincere in the Practice of it*, p. 50. None, as he says, p. 51. *who err in the Fundamentals, either of Faith or Practice, have any Right to the Charity, Peace and Communion of the Church.* So that Believers must exercise their evangelical Love one towards another. Brotherly Love can only be extended towards such as are Brethren in Christ; and to these it must be extended. This is plain, from such Texts as these, *A new Commandment I give unto you, that ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another. By this shall all Men know that ye are my Disciples, if you love one another. Beloved, let us love one another? for Love is of God. See that ye love one another, with a pure Heart fervently. Above all Things, have fervent Charity among your selves.* * This, as Mr. Bennet well says, is evident, from the Nature of the Thing, (the contrary would destroy the Distinction between the Church and the World, the Kingdom of Christ, and Kingdom of Satan; defile the Temple of God, pollute the Ordinances, and ruin the Discipline of the Gospel) and 'tis confirmed by many express Testimonies of Scripture, Tit. iii. 10. 1 Tim. vi. 3, 5. 2 Joh. ver. 9, 10, 11. 1 Cor. v. 11. p. 51. We must love the Persons of all Men, with a common Love; with a Love of Benevolence; even those that are our Enemies. But true Believers, and sincere Lovers of Christ, and they only, are to be loved with a special, complacential Love. Brethren in Christ, and they only, must exercise brotherly Kindness one towards another,

* Joh. xiii. 34, 35. 1 Joh. iv. 7. 1 Pet. i. 22. and iv. 8.
exchange

exchange all friendly Offices, and have actual Communion, in the same Ordinances and Worship of God, one with another. They must be such, as *continue steadfast in the Apostles Doctrine*, if they would *continue in Fellowship, and in breaking of Bread, and in Prayers*, Acts ii. 42. But lest we should differ about who is, and who is not, a Believer: About who they are, and who they are not, that retain the Fundamentals of Religion. I shall,

III. Say something about Fundamentals. And here indeed lies the Pinch of Mr. Bennet's Sixth Proposition. Confusion here, makes Confusion all over our Faith and Obedience. Unfair Dealing here, makes all our other Performances, though never so plausible, very unfair and dangerous. To wrap up Fundamentals in dark, ambiguous, or equivocal Expressions is mean and base. Here we must be particular and determinate, and not amuse the Reader with general, indefinite Assertions, as the Manner of some is. Mr. Bennet, by what he says, p. 54, 55. would affright any Man from meddling about Fundamentals; but this is our Help, that he himself, notwithstanding what he says, has condescended to give us a Sketch of them. In p. 57, 58. he gives us an Account of such Articles, as, he says, *may be reckoned among the Fundamentals*. Among the Fundamentals! How many more has he behind? Here is, as I reckon, Eleven or Twelve. Had we them all, we could tell better what to say of them. As to these we have, I wish he had put down the great Article of the Resurrection of the same Body, in more express Terms. And that, that Fundamental, *That God treats with Sinners upon Terms of Faith and Repentance*, had been better worded: For though it is most true, that Repentance from dead Works, and Faith towards God, are Fundamentals; yet, I think, they are not so, as Terms upon which God treats with Sinners: At least, this is not evident from God's Word. Had Mr. Bennet laid down the Ground-work of Faith and Repentance, to wit, the great Work of Regeneration, or Conversion, as a Fundamental, it would have been better in my Thoughts. The great and necessary Doctrine of Christ's Satisfaction should have been more fully expressed. But that Article, which Mr. Bennet explains very badly, and expresses

presses uncertainly, is this; *That there is but One God, and yet that there are Three Persons, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, to whom the Scripture ascribes Divinity.* I say, of this Article he explains it very badly; for, according to what he says of the Three Persons, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, in p. 95. it is plain to me, that he holds, that they are Three distinct Essences or Beings, which I take to be a very bad Explanation of the One God: And so far from being a fundamental Truth, that it is a gross Error. The latter Part of this Article, that there are *Three Persons, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, to whom the Scripture ascribes Divinity,* is uncertain, as to the Meaning of it. He may mean by it, either more or less, than the *Arians* mean, when they mention the Divinity of Christ. The worst of Hereticks, both *Arians* and *Socinians*, will ascribe Divinity to Christ; and so, no doubt, would subscribe to this Article of Mr. *Bennet*. He knows, well enough, in what a mean degrading, blasphemous Sense the *Arians*, or New Scheme-Men, use the Word Divinity, when applied to Christ. *Whiston* seems to take it ill, that any should say he denies the Divinity of Christ; and yet, 'tis plain, he takes Christ to be no more than a made God. Some of them will say, that Christ is God by Nature; and, at the same Time, deny his absolute Eternity, and necessary Existence. And, why did not Mr. *Bennet* distinguish himself, in this Article, from such Hereticks, as *Arians* and *Socinians* are? Why did he not tell us what he means by Divinity, seeing this is a Word that they will use, who ascribe no proper Divinity to Christ, or the Holy Ghost at all. Does he mean by it necessary Existence; or, the absolute, eternal Deity? Does he mean the One, infinite Godhead, or divine Essence? Does he mean, that the Son and the Holy Ghost are the very same, most high, living and true God, that God the Father is? And that they are equal in Power and Glory? If he means this, why does he not speak out; and tell us the Truth plainly? If he means not this, why does he not speak out, and tell us the blasphemy plainly? Equivocating, and sculking in the Dark, in Matters of such Moment, is very mean. Besides, to tell us, we must extend our Christian Charity to such as retain the Fundamentals of Religion: But how shall we know

know who these are, if they deal in Words of a double Meaning, as he does ? Certainly, they that deny the absolute eternal Deity, and the necessary Existence of the Son and Holy Ghost ; they that deny the Son and Holy Ghost to be the One, only, living and true God, that the Father is, are no Objects of Christian Charity. They are Hereticks of the grossest Kind. They are no Christians, but Overthrowers of the Foundation of the Christian Faith. *He that denieth the Deity of Christ, denieth his Essence ; and he that denieth his Essence, denieth Christ, and is no Christian.* * *A Man that maintains the Arian Principles, can no more be really a Christian, than a dead Body can be really a Man, when the Soul, a constituent, essential Part of that Species, is separated from it.* † These are the Persons that must be excluded our Christian Communion and Charity ; and, if they had any Sense of Religion upon their Consciences, they would exclude themselves. These are the Persons we must not receive into our Houses, or be familiar with. These are such as Dr. Calamy speaks of, when he says, *That should any, in our Time, arrive at that Height of Malignity, as to pour Contempt on Christ and his Doctrine, we ought to be cautious of keeping up Familiarity with them, &c.* ‖

What is concluded in Mr. Bennet's Seventh P R O P. is,

T H A T no impartial, sincere Inquirer after Truth ever did, or ever shall, err in Fundamentals, p. 59.

E X P L A N A T I O N.

H E R E you must take special Notice, what Mr. Bennet means, by an impartial, sincere Inquirer, else you may foully mistake. I understand, that he means one who is savingly enlighten'd, and renewed in the Spirit of his Mind : Such an one as has his Loins girt about with Truth ; and whose Sincerity is a godly Sincerity ; such as, 1. Flows from *the special Grace of God* ; 2. As bears *the Fruits of Righteousness* ; 3. As brings forth these

* Baxter's Abr. Hist. Counc. p. 48. † Modern Arians Unmask'd, p. 49. ‖ Sermons on the Trinity, p. 420.

Fruits by *Jesus Christ* ; 4. As, in its Fruitfulness, aims at the *Praise and Glory of God*, Phil. i. 10, 11. This I take to be the Sincerity of Mr. *Bennet's* sincere Inquirer. The Description he gives of him, and the Texts he builds his Discourse upon, seem to me to manifest this. And of this, and no other Inquirer, is the Conclusion true. I mean, he is not an impartial, sincere Inquirer after Truth, who rejects divine Truth, after a fair Proposal of it to him. He who has the Holy Scriptures, and the Means of discovering their Excellency, and yet denies the divine Authority of them, or that they are given by the Inspiration of God ; such a Man, let his Pretences to Sincerity be what they will, he certainly is an unsincere, wicked Man, a Man of an evil Conscience, and unholy Life : For he denies and rejects the *Only Rule* of Faith and Obedience. He denies and rejects the *Blood* that purges the Conscience from dead Works, and the *Spirit* that causeth us to walk in God's Statutes, and do them. To talk of an accepted Sincerity, or of any one's being taken into God's special Favour, who has the divine Revelation offered to him, but rejects it, is to talk impiously : For, it is to arraign the infinite Wisdom of God ; as if he had made a Revelation of his Will, at the dear Expende of the Life of his only begotten Son, for the Salvation of Sinners, and yet that Revelation not absolutely necessary to the Salvation of any. If we make such as deny the Gospel sincere good Men, we certainly make the very worst of Men sincere good Men. We make Infidels, and Despisers of the Gospel, as hopeful for Salvation, as those that believe and obey it. And so they who reject the Holy Scriptures, blasphemously rank Christ and the Holy Ghost amongst meer Creatures, and deny all Gospel-Ordinances, if they be but sincere in doing so, stand as fair for eternal Salvation, as they who sincerely believe in Christ, and diligently observe Gospel-Ordinances. If a Deist, who rejects the Holy Scriptures, may, after all that, be a good Man ; because of his declared Sincerity, Why may not an Atheist be a good Man, if he declare he is sincere, as no doubt but he will, in denying the Being of a God ? Before Men give way to such foolish, and horribly wicked, Tenets as these, let them seriously consider ;

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sider; That he that believeth not, is condemned already. That the Wrath of God abides on him. That he is lost. That he hath made God a Lyar. And that, except we believe that Christ is he, we shall die in our Sins. There certainly is no other Remedy. It is Faith, or Death. We must believe in Christ, or perish eternally. A very ingenious Author writes thus; No Man among us, says he, to whom the Gospel is preached, can be termed a true Fearer of God, if he be not also a Believer on Jesus Christ. -- But if a Man, to whom the Gospel is preached, remain an Unbeliever, he is not a true Fearer of God; for if he was, he would kiss the Son in Obedience to his Command: He is not a true Worker of Righteousness; for if he was, he would work this Work of God, submitting unto the Law of God: He is not accepted of God; but rejected by him: And, for all the Works of Righteousness that he may pretend to, and value himself upon, he shall perish for ever; and the Wrath of God, which now smokes against him, will break forth into a devouring Flame. O that Men were wise, and would consider before it be too late! *

Mr. Bennet's Eighth P R O P. is to this Purpose.

THAT the not observing the Distinction, between Errors fundamental, and not fundamental, -- has been the main Source of Animosities and Schisms in the Church, from Age to Age, p. 62.

A N S W E R.

By the Rule of Contraries, it follows, that the observing the Distinction, between fundamental and not fundamental Errors, will be the main Source of Unity and Peace in the Churches of Christ. Here then is what we must observe with all possible Care, to wit, That fundamental Errors spring not up amongst us. If we heedlessly suffer fundamental Errors to grow in

* Mr. Nathaniel Taylor's Discourse of Faith in Christ, Pag. 215, 216.

the Church, we occasion her Animosities and Schisms. If we silently allow of, stand neuter to, or connive at the spreading of fundamental Errors, we silently allow of, stand neuter to, and connive at the Ruin of the Churches of Christ. Therefore, as ever we desire the Unity and Peace of the Churches of Christ, we must oppose fundamental Errors, and labour to crush them in the very Bud. We must, to our utmost, endeavour their utter Extirpation. Here is all our Hope of Unity and Peace. When fundamental Errors creep in among us, there is nothing but War and Rumours of War. This is the very Case at this Day: Fundamental Errors are got into the Churches of Christ; and make distressing Work there; these Churches are, in some Measure, endeavouring to purge themselves of these Errors; and whoever puts not to a helping Hand, some way or other, may be reckon'd accessory to the Woe and Desolation of these Churches. I think we may know who are Hereticks, from what Mr. Bennet says, p. 65. *That Heresy, is a malignant Error in some or other essential, fundamental Doctrine of Christianity. The Heretick the Apostle mentions, Tit. ii. 3, is said to be subverted; "Holding some Doctrine, or "Opinion, that subverteth the Foundation of the true "Faith;" as Hymeneus and Philetus, who denied the Resurrection, 2 Tim. ii. 18. and those that denied the Lord that bought them; and so brought in damnable Heresies, 2 Pet. ii. 1. To be sure then, of all others, they are Hereticks who deny the eternal Deity of Christ, and the Holy Ghost. And these are the restless Disturbers of our Israel at this Time. And whilst such as these are in her, who are most notorious Enemies to her, she can never have either Unity or Peace. Certainly denying Christ to be the Most High God, is to deny the Lord that bought them, in the worst Sense: For how can Souls be bought, and saving Grace and Glory be purchased for them, without an infinite Price or Value? And how could Christ pay down an infinite Price, unless he was an infinite Person; and so the Most High God? Therefore, they that deny Christ to be God, in the proper Acceptation of the Word, are such Hereticks as bring in damnable Heresies, And, notwithstanding all that Mr. Bennet says to ban-*

ter the Art of Heretick-making; yet *he* makes Hereticks as well as others; and must therefore be as bad as those that hereticate Persons erring fundamentally; unless he be worse than these, and will not hereticate them, though he has done it. This Eighth Proposition, if it have any Meaning in it, makes a Distinction between fundamental Errors, and fundamental Truth; and consequently between *Erroneous* Persons, and those that are *Orthodox*. For what Difference is there, between saying a Person errs fundamentally, and that he is erroneous? Or, that such a Person holds fundamental Truth, and that he is orthodox? And, if there be little or no Difference here, how comes it, that Mr. *Bennet* does, with so much Vehemence and Sharpness of Stile, inveigh against the Distinction of *Orthodox* and *Erroneous*? He calls it an *invidious, uncharitable, and senseless Distinction*; and says, *it directly tends to suppress the Truth*, &c. p. 45. I see no more Envy, or Uncharitableness, and no less Sense in it, than in his own Assertion, that some err fundamentally; if he will allow, what he necessarily supposes, that some hold fundamental Truth. It is true, there is no Distinction, or Proposition, but it may be abused. The *Arians* and *Socinians* may assume to themselves the Word *Orthodox*; yet, for all that, they are certainly Hereticks: For they err in, or hold what is contrary to, the fundamental Doctrines of Christianity. And there are, blessed be the Lord! some orthodox still, some who speak and teach aright; or what is agreeable to the Oracle of Truth. This Distinction of orthodox and erroneous appears to me to be grounded upon the Word of God; upon those Places that expressly distinguish between Truth and Error, and speak of *sound Doctrine*, and *Error*, and *Heresy*; and *our knowing the Spirit of Truth*, and *the Spirit of Error*. The Scripture speaks of some that *err*, that *live in Error*, and are *led away with Error*: And why may not such as these be called *erroneous* Persons? On the other hand, we are told, in God's Word, of *holding fast the Form of sound Words*; of a *sound Mind*: And why may not such Persons as do so be called orthodox, or sound Persons? I think we should be unwilling to pull down this Distinction of orthodox and erroneous,

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lest that should make way for pulling down the other Distinction of good and bad Men. If our Mouths must be stop'd in Reference to the one ; why not in respect of the other ? If we may not say, there are sound, or orthodox, and erroneous Persons ; why may we say there are holy and wicked Men ? What must we say ? Must we say, that all are sound and good Men, let them believe and live as they list ? This looks like the Aim of some Men ; especially those, who can call them sincere good Men who reject the Scripture.

THE main Stroke in Mr. Bennet's Ninth P R O P. and what he dictates under it, is to *determine, what are not Fundamentals*. And here he had large Scope ; but he turns short : And, after a smooth Harangue or two against the *Arians*, and New Scheme-Men, he falls foul upon Fundamentals themselves. He is so very nice, and trims so neatly, that he spoils all, and cuts into the Quick. His Drift seems to be, to turn, and turn again, till he has turned real Fundamentals into no Fundamentals at all. He says, p. 76. speaking of the Doctrine of the Trinity, *That he can't think it (the disputed Part) has the Importance of a Fundamental*. Men, says he, *may be equally sincere, equally pious and good, and equally accepted of God, notwithstanding their different Sentiments in this Controversy*. He goes on and says, *Nor is it plain enough to pass for Fundamental ; nor easy enough to be understood, nor clearly enough revealed*. You see he is bold and positive enough here. But, after all this Positiveness, let us take heart, and look over it again. He says, *I can't think it*, meaning the disputed Part of the Doctrine of the Trinity, *has the Importance of a Fundamental*. And yet it is most evident, that the disputed Part of this Doctrine is, whether Jesus Christ, and the Holy Ghost, be the One only living, and Most High God ; the very same God that the Father is. By the *Arians*, or New Scheme-Men, it is expressly said, *That the Son is not Self-existent, not necessarily existing ; that the Father alone is Self-existent, underived, unoriginated, independent, MADE OF NONE, &c.* That the Holy Ghost is one of those Beings, brought into Existence by the Power of the Son of God, in Subordination to the Will and Power of the Father ;

ther; and that he is not God at all. * Dr. Waterland has demonstrated, Nine several Ways, (and more he says might be added) from their own Writings, that the Abettors of the New Scheme make God the Son, (and so the Holy Ghost of course) as very a Creature as ever did Arius, or Eunomius, or any Arian whatever. So that it cannot be denied, but the disputed Part of the Doctrine of the Trinity is, whether the Son and the Holy Ghost are the same self-existent, necessary Being, that the Father is; whether they are the same, true, proper, and Most High God, that the Father is. Tho' this is not all that is disputed about the Trinity, yet this is the main, and what is most disputed about it. Therefore, when Mr. Bennet says, he can't think it (*the disputed Part*) has the Importance of a Fundamental; his Meaning must be, that it is not a Fundamental, or necessary to Salvation, to believe, that Jesus Christ, and the Holy Ghost, are the same God, that God the Father is: Or, that they are infinite, eternal, and unchangeable, in their Being, Wisdom, Power, Holiness, Justice, Goodness and Truth, as He is: That it has not the Importance of a Fundamental, to believe, that the Son, and the Holy Ghost, are as truly and properly God, as the Father is. But what can be of greater Importance to us, than to know whether the Object of our Worship be God or a Creature? We worship Christ and the Holy Ghost, as well the Father; is it not necessary to know whether, in so doing, we worship One God only, or One God and Two Creatures? Is it not necessary to know whether, in the constant Course of our Worship, we are Idolaters or not? Is it not of the last Importance to know whether we, who are baptized into the Name of God the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, be baptized into the Name of one God only, or of two Creatures also? Whether we are obliged, by our baptismal Vow, to serve two Creatures all our Days, equally with the living and true God! Is it possible, that any Thing can be of greater Consequence, to those that lay the whole Stress of their Salvation on Christ, than to know that he is very God, as well as very Man? For, if he be not

* Supplement to the Case of *Arian-Subscription*, p. 21.

God, he cannot save; there is no Saviour besides God; and therefore they that trust in him for Salvation, are lost, and must perish for ever. Is it not necessary to know that our Saviour is God? We are told in God's Word, that there is Salvation in no other but Christ; that there is no other Name but his, whereby we must be saved: Accordingly we trust in him for Salvation, we pray to him for it, and praise him for any Share in it; and yet we are Idolaters, in doing so, if he is not God. Should we not then be sure that he is God? Can any Thing be of greater Concern, to the Glory of God, than to give him the sole Honour of our Salvation? And yet how can we know that we do that, whilst we are ignorant who Christ, our Saviour is? What can their Faith and Hope, their Peace and Joy be, who seek Salvation from Christ; and yet are wholly ignorant whether he is God or a Creature? If it be not necessary to believe, that Christ is the Most High God; then it is not necessary to believe, that we are commanded to believe in him, or to love, fear, or obey him. To honour the Son, as we honour the Father, it is absolutely necessary we believe him to be the same God with the Father: And unless we so honour the Son we honour not the Father. Whoever wants to be establish'd in the Importance of the Doctrine, of the true and proper Godhead of Christ, let him read seriously that excellent Book of the learned Mr. *John Guyse*, entitled, *Jesus Christ God-Man*. In p. 252. of that Book, he says, *Take away the proper Deity of Christ, and, as far as I see, you take away the Basis of all Christian Religion; and disjoint its whole Frame, to the utter Subversion of its spiritual Excellence and vital Power; and to the utter Disappointment of all the Hopes of Salvation, that are built upon it. Hence the Doctrine of Christ's Godhead is made the Foundation of his Church, on which all its Safety and Blessedness depends, as Christ himself has assured us.* As to the true and proper Godhead of the Holy Ghost; it is as necessary to believe that, as it is to believe, that we are baptized into his Name; and it is as necessary to believe that, as it is to believe what God expressly says in his Word. We had better renounce that Baptism, than stick to that, which is into the Name of a Creature. It is as necessary to believe the eternal Deity of the Holy Spirit,

Spirit, as it is to believe that any are or can be born again of him, receive holy Fruit from him, or have Communion with him, or with the Father and the Son by him; for certainly all this is the Work of *Him* who is God, and no other. In a word, it is as necessary to believe, that the Holy Spirit is truly and properly God, the One Most High God, as it is to believe that the Holy Scriptures are the Word of God: For 'tis certain the Holy Spirit was the Author of them; *Holy Men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost*. Therefore, if the Holy Ghost be God, as most certain he is, then the Holy Scriptures are the Word of God. But they who blasphemously hold, that the Holy Ghost is but a Creature, do make the Holy Scriptures the Word of a Creature, and no more. Who ever would be fully satisfied, of the Importance of the Doctrine of the proper Godhead of the Holy Spirit, let him read another substantial Book of the above-mention'd Author. * Further, I would fain know what Point in all the Christian Religion is necessary to be believed, if the true and proper Godhead of the Son and Holy Ghost be not? If this be not a Fundamental, what is? Let that be shown. This seems to me to be as necessary, or of as great Importance, as any one of those Fundamentals Mr. Bennet has reckon'd up; which belongs purely to the Christian Religion. Is it not as necessary to believe, that Christ is very God, as that our Acceptance with God is thro' him? Is it not as necessary to believe, that he is God, as that he is our only Master in Religion? Or, that Christ is able to save us, and bring us to Heaven, as that there is an Heaven? But Mr. Bennet says, *The disputed Part of the Doctrine of the Trinity is not plain enough to pass for a Fundamental; not easy enough to be understood, nor clearly enough revealed*. But I answer, and say again, that the disputed Part is, whether the Son and the Holy Ghost be truly and properly God, and this he cannot deny; nay, he confesses it, when he says, that Dr. Clark's Scheme, which he knows is disputed, supposes a sort of an intermediate Being, that is neither

* The Holy Spirit a Divine Person; by Mr. Guyse.

God nor a Creature, but something between both. Now I ask, Is it not plain enough, and easy enough to understand, and clearly enough reveal'd, that Christ is truly and properly God, when he is expressly called, in God's Word, *Jehovah*; *the Lord of Hosts himself*; *the Lord God of Israel*; *God*, without any Restriction; *He who is over all, God, blessed for ever*; *the great God*; *the true God*, and *Eternal Life*; *the First and the Last*; *the Lord God of the Holy Prophets*? What can be more plain and clear, or more easy to be understood, than these Expressions? What Words can be invented, to express the true and proper Divinity of Christ more clearly to us, than these, that he is *the true God*; *the great God*; *the Lord God of Israel*, &c. Is it not more easy to believe, that the Holy Spirit, by these Expressions, means that Christ is *the great and the true God*, than to believe that he means *no such Thing*; but the quite contrary, *that he is no God at all*, properly speaking? Is it not easy to believe, that Christ is the Most High God, when the Spirit of God tells us, that he is *Jehovah, the mighty God*; and that *he is over all, God, blessed for ever*? Is it not easier to believe, that Christ is *the First and the Last*, when he himself says so, than to believe that he is not the First and the Last, but a second, derived, dependent Being? When the Holy Scriptures ascribe those Names, Titles and Properties to Christ and the Holy Ghost, which are peculiar and essential to the most High God; when the Works of Creation and Salvation are given to them both; when that divine Worship, which the Scripture appropriates to the one living and true God only, is, by Scripture-warrant, given to Christ and the Holy Ghost; whether is it easier, after this, to believe that Christ and the Holy Spirit are infinitely inferior to God; no Creator, but Creatures only, and ought not to be worshiped at all? Or, that these two Persons, together with the Father, are the One Most High God, the only Creator and Saviour, and sole Object of Worship? He who can deny, after reading the above-named Texts, that the proper and true Divinity of Christ is clearly enough revealed to be a Fundamental, may, in my Thoughts, deny that any Thing in Scripture is a Fundamental. For I would ask such an one, what other

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Truth, what other Point, in all God's Word, is more clearly laid down, than that is? I take this to be as clearly revealed in Scripture, as any one of Mr. *Bennet's* Fundamentals, or as any one of those Things which he says are *clearly revealed there*, concerning the Doctrine of the Trinity, and which he reckons up, p. 94, 95, &c. He that can put a contrary Sense upon such Texts, as are above-mentioned, and say they hold forth no such a Thing, as that Christ is the One true God, should consider, whether he does not thereby most sadly disparage the Word of God, make it, with the Papists, a Nose of Wax, and give a plain Occasion to Men to lessen their Esteem of, and Veneration for, the Holy Scriptures. Let such an one seriously think on what a learned Dr. says, among other Things, *Now to see Men that profess to make the Bible their Rule and Standard, offering such open Violence to the plain Declarations which often there occur, concerning the Son's Deity, as is done by many from Day to Day, has, in my Apprehension, done as much as any one Thing that could be mentioned, to bring the Scriptures (which, in those Ages wherein Religion has been in the most thriving State, have been treated with so much Respect) under a general Contempt.** And seeing Mr. *Bennet* is for having Men to go through our Congregations, with a proper Number of Queries in their Hand, let him begin, and if he does declare that, after strict Examination, none of the plain Declarations in Scripture, of the Son's proper Deity, do convince them that he is the One true God; but, that still they believe he is a Creature: I am persuaded it will be proved, that they have been taught the Bible backward.

MR. *Bennet* goes on, to touch lightly upon the *Arian-Scheme*; he says, *It can't be fundamental*, p. 77. No, God forbid it should. Who ever said it was, or maintain'd it to be so, but Hereticks? But why did not Mr. *Bennet* tell us, that it is so far from being a fundamental Truth, that 'tis no Truth at all; but a fundamental Error, a gross

* Dr. *Calamy's* Sermons on the Trinity, p. 161, 162.

blasphemous Heresy? He says, it *wants Evidence sufficient to entitle it to a Place among Fundamentals*, &c. p. 77.

Wants Evidence sufficient! But why so low, why so favourable in Opposition to that horrid Error, which not only wants Evidence sufficient, but has no *Evidence at all*; not the least Ground in all God's Word, but expressly contradictory to much of it? This Error is founded upon nothing but silly Objections, sophistical Cavils, and blasphemous Quibbles. He says, *The Scripture-Characters of the Son, viz. The true God, the mighty God, the great God, &c. furnish such Arguments against this Hypothesis, as requires more Skill in Criticism to answer, than most Christians are Masters of*. But, though he grants these Texts furnish Arguments against this Hypothesis, yet he does not say, that they plainly prove Christ to be the Most High God, the very God that the Father is. Nor yet, 2. does he grant them to be plain Arguments against this wicked Hypothesis; but that they may be Arguments against it when they are criticised on; else what needs so much Criticism in the Answer? 3. Does he think there are any Christians Masters of so much Skill in Criticism; or, if he please, of so much Contradiction to God's Word, as to deny that these Texts are a plain Proof of the true and proper Deity of Christ?

IN the next Place Mr. Bennet, p. 78, 79. hints, that Dr. Clark's Scheme is *not easy and plain enough to be the necessary Matter of every Christian's Belief*. For he says, It supposes a sort of an intermediate Being, that is *neither God nor a Creature*, &c. But for the Honour of blessed Jesus, and the Sake of precious Souls, he had done well, if he had shown, as he might, that that pitiful Shift, of an intermediate Being, has neither Divinity, Philosophy, nor common Sense in it. How comes it, that a Man of so much Learning and Knowledge as Mr. Bennet is, should say, *That for a Being, derived and dependent, to be the Subject of infinite Perfections; to have them residing in them as his Properties, is not very intelligible, at least to ordinary Capacities*? When, I hope, he believes it is not intelligible at all; neither by ordinary nor extraordinary Capacities. I am persuaded, that he himself, with all his Capacity, can never make it very intelligible: No, nor in the

least intelligible, to any Men of good Sense and Learning.

MR. Bennet advances to attack the orthodox Faith, as it is expressed in the First Article of the Church of England, and in the Assembly's Catechism. In the Article it is thus, *In the Unity of the Godhead there be Three Persons of One Substance, Power and Eternity; the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost.* In the Catechism thus, *There are Three Persons in the Godhead, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost; and these Three are One God, the same in Substance, equal in Power and Glory.* He says, p. 79. this Scheme, as he calls it, is attended with very great Difficulties; and that when Men come to explain it, they run into different inconsistent Hypotheses. Thus would he make a Bugbear of the greatest and most necessary Truth in all the Christian Religion, by frightening Men from believing it a fundamental Point; because of the very great Difficulties that attend it, and the inconsistent Hypotheses Men run into in their Explanation of it. As he did before deny this Doctrine to be plain enough to pass for a Fundamental, when he denied the disputed Part to be so: So again here he evidently denies it to be a Fundamental; for he says it is attended with very great Difficulties; but he says a Fundamental must be plain and easy. What does he own then, when he at length condescends to own, p. 92. *That something of this Doctrine is of very great Moment, and may be called fundamental, to believe in the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost and subject our selves to these Three glorious Persons as respectively concerned in the Work of our Redemption, with a suitable Conduct of Life, is our practical Christianity?* I say, what is it he owns here? Does he own, that the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, are the One Most High God, of one and the very same undivided Essence, or Nature? And that this is a fundamental Truth? If he does, he contradicts what he had said before; where he said, the disputed Part had not the Importance of a Fundamental; for this is the disputed Part: And also, where he says, it is attended with very great Difficulties. If he does not own here, that the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, are the One Most High God, then this Assertion is both egre-

egregiously guileful and erroneous: For how can we believe in, and subject our selves to, the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, except they be the One living and true God? For believing in, and subjecting our selves to them, is worshipping of them; but we must worship God only.

The next Thing I would take notice of, under this Ninth Proposition, is, that most material Question, Mr. Bennet mentions, p. 84. viz. *Whether the divine Essence and Nature be one and the same in all the Persons, specifically or numerically, i. e. Whether the Three Persons have one Essence in Number, or Three Essences of the same Kind and Perfection?* The former is the Truth, and he owns that it is asserted by most, at least, of the Moderns. The latter, that they have Three Essences of the same Kind and Perfection, is an Error; and, according to my Apprehension, a very gross one. Yet, as I understand Mr. Bennet, 'tis what he holds: He says, p. 94, 95. speaking of the Three divine Persons, that he reckons them *really distinct Persons*, i. e. says he, *distinct intelligent Agents*. By distinct intelligent Agents, I understand that Mr. Bennet means distinct Essences, Natures, or Beings: Because he opposes his real Distinction to an Identity, or Sameness of numerical Essence; and because, quoting Dr. Waterland, saying, *Each divine Person is an individual intelligent Agent*; by which, says Mr. Bennet, one would think he allows of a Distinction of Essences and Natures: I hope then, that when Mr. Bennet himself says, that they are Three really distinct intelligent Agents, he will give any body leave to think or say, that he allows, yea asserts thereby, a Distinction of Essences and Natures. Before I come to the Arguments against this Error, or Heresy, I would mind Mr. Bennet, 1. That we must cast out of our Schemes all such Terms and Definitions, as the Scripture doth not furnish us with, and are not found in the Doctrine, as it stands in Scripture. Pag. 94. Now where does the Scripture furnish us with these Terms, in Reference to the divine Three, that they are *really distinct intelligent Agents*? Not but we may use Words that are not in the Scripture, and express the Sense of the Scripture by them. But I would have Men, that make Rules
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and Canons, to keep them themselves. 2. Mr. Bennet is here speaking of what is clearly revealed in Scripture, concerning the Doctrine of the Trinity: But where, in the Scripture, is it clearly revealed, that the Three divine Persons are *really distinct intelligent Agents*, or *distinct Essences*? 3. Mr. Bennet, p. 94. is here speaking of that in which there's an *Agreement among Christians*: But is there an Agreement among Christians, that the Three Persons in the Godhead are Three Essences? How proves he this, especially, since he himself owns, that by most, at least of the Moderns, it is asserted, that the Three Persons have all but One numerical Essence? What are most, at least of the Moderns, no Christians? I believe he does not mean to assert they are; but why does he leave his Expressions so unguarded as may import it? The Point to be proved is, That the Three Persons in the sacred and ever-blessed Trinity are not Three distinct Essences, Natures, or Beings. Or, That there are not Three distinct Essences in the One true God: But One Essence, or Nature only. The Arguments are briefly such as follow.

I. Because God is *most perfectly and infinitely One*. BERNARD and others say, he is *Unissimus*, most One. There is, there can be no other Being so much One as he; nay, his Unity or Oneness infinitely exceeds all other Unity, and must needs do so; because he is an infinitely perfect Being. But if God be constituted of Three Essences, he is not so much One, as one Soul or one Angel is. Certainly our Idea of One arises from the Oneness of the Subject, and not from the Plurality of it; one Soul is more One, than two would be, suppose them united; and one Angel, than two: So one divine Essence is more One, than three divine Essences are One. The more One the Being is, the more perfect is its Unity. To found Unity upon a Plurality of Beings is to destroy its very Nature, which lies in being undivided in it self, and divided from every other Thing. When two or three Essences are united, there may indeed be a Union, but Unity is quite confounded, yea lost in a number of Unities; for the Three Essences, or Beings, supposed to be in the Godhead, are each of them *unum, verum, & bonum*. Now which of these Three Unities does distinguish God from every other Being? Or there is a fourth
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Unity in God; and if so, what is that Essence, or Being this Fourth Unity belongs to?

II. Because it *overthrows the Simplicity of God*. Three Essences, or Beings, cannot possibly make up a Being so simple and single, as that Being is, which is but *One infinitely simple Essence*. Bishop Usher says, *That Simpleness or Singleness in God, is an essential Property in God, whereby every Thing that is in God is God himself.* * And therefore it is impossible there should be Three Essences in God; unless we run into this Absurdity, that each of these Essences distinctly consider'd is God himself; and then God himself is Three Gods themselves. It is said, we are sure that God hath not, by his Word, taught us to ascribe to him *universal absolute Simplicity*. Though that should be granted, yet surely there is a difference between universal absolute Simplicity, and a Compound (I can call it no other) of Three Essences. Though God should not be absolutely simple, yet it does not follow, that therefore he is no more simple than a Being constituted of Three Beings. God undoubtedly is void of all Composition, and surely then of that which is of a *Thing and a Thing*. But it is plain to me, that God is absolutely simple, that absolute and omnimodous Simplicity belongs to him *abstractly consider'd*; because he is *absolutely and infinitely perfect*. Now absolute Perfection can but reside in One Essence, else there would be more Essences than One absolutely perfect, and so more Gods than One. When it is objected against the Simplicity of God, that there is a Plurality in him, it is granted, *That the Objection holds where there is a Plurality of Essences, Beings, or Things, but not where there is only a Plurality of Subsistences. In the Divine Nature, tho' there be a Trinity, therefore a Plurality of Subsistences, or Persons, yet there is but One Essence.* †

III. The supposed Three distinct Essences, either are each one of them *self-existent, all-sufficient, absolutely eternal, and infinitely perfect*; or he is not: If he is,

* Body of Divinity, p. 35.
list, pag. 6.

† Norton's Orthodox Evangelist.

then each of them is truly and properly God. For this is a just Notion of God, that he is a *self-existent, all-sufficient, eternal, and infinitely perfect Being*. So this Notion brings in *Polytheism*, and that of the groffer sort, as is observed by a judicious Divine; *So that*, says he, *such a specifical Unity of the Father and the Son would indeed effectually confute Dr. Clark, and the Arian-Gentlemen. But it would deliver the World from one gross Error, by bringing in another as bad, if not worse; it would drive out Arianism, by introducing a groffer sort of Polytheism, than was ever owned by the wiser sort of Heathens.* * If no One of these Three Essences is *self-existent, all-sufficient, eternal, and infinitely perfect*, then it is impossible they should constitute God; nor ought they to be worshipped at all. If one of them be infinitely perfect, and the other not so, then God is compounded of infinite and finite; which is infinitely absurd. I might here shew the Absurdity of this Notion from all the divine Attributes, but I shall confine my self to one only, and that is God's Infiniteness, whereupon I argue, If God be infinite, he cannot be Three or Two Essences or Beings; but he is infinite, *ergo*. The Minor will not be denied. The Consequence of the Major is evident, because there cannot be more infinite Beings, or Essences, than One. *But two infinite Beings*, says Dr. CALAMY, *there cannot be, because either they one of them will include the other, and so the included must needs be finite; or it would not extend to the other, and so it self would not be infinite.* † One, speaking of two supreme independent Principles, says, *'Tis the very same Thing in Result and Consequence, as saying Two absolute Infinites; and he that says Two had as good say Ten, or Fifty, or any other Number whatsoever. Nay, if there can be Two essentially distinct absolute Infinites, there may be an Infinity of such absolute Infinites; that is as much as to say, none of them would be an absolute Infinite, or that none of them all would be properly*

* *Lorimer's Scripture-Demonstration, &c.* p. 80. † *Sermons on the Trinity*, p. 233.

And really infinite ; for real Infinity is strict and absolute Infinity, and only that. * And if the Three Essences, or Natures, which are said to constitute God, are not infinite, then they are but Creatures.

IV. The Three distinct Essences, of Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, which constitute the One God, have, by their supposed Union, *One and the very same Nature common to them all* ; or they have not : If they have, then it follows, not only that the Three Essences are *One and the very same* Essence, which is a plain Contradiction ; but also, that each of these Three Essences is Two Essences, being one Essence as it is God, and another Essence as it is the Father, or Son, or Holy Ghost. But if they have no common Essence, or Nature, then God in no Sense is One Essence, & Being.

V. If each of these Three distinct Essences, of the Father, Son and Holy Ghost, are the *entire individual Essence of God when conceived together*, then no One of these Essences, when conceived by it self, as a distinct individual Essence, is God : For no one Constituent is the Whole, nor can be reckon'd as such in any Propriety of Speech ; so that hence it follows very clearly, that the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, consider'd *as such* in their distinct individual Essences, are *not God at all* in any proper Sense. What I build this Argument on is, the Words of a great Author, speaking of the Essences of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, he says, *Each of these conceived by it self are individual Essences, but conceived together, they are the entire individual Essence of God. For there is but One such Essence, and no more, and it can never be multiplied, nor divided into more of the same Name and Nature. As the Body, and Soul of a Man, are one individual Body, and one individual Soul, but both together are but one individual Man* : Thus he. From whence it is plain ; 1. That the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, *as such*, have their distinct individual Essences. 2. That God has an *entire individual Essence*, and that Essence is but *One*. 3. That the Father,

* Ditton's Discourse of the Resurrection of Christ, Page 501, 502.

Son, and Holy Ghost, consider'd *as such*, are no of them God : For, consider'd *as such*, they are *Three distinct* Essences ; but God is *One entire* Essence, and no more. They are Three Individuals, God is but One Individual. So that, consider'd in their distinct Essences, they are no one of them any more God, than the Body or the Soul of Man, distinctly taken, is Man. This appears to me not only *Arianism*, but worse ; for here is not only a plain Denial, that the Son, and the Holy Ghost, consider'd *as such*, are God ; but the Father, *as such*, is denied also to be God. It is said, *When we predicate Godhead, or the Name of God, of any One of them, we herein express a true, but an inadequate Conception of God ; i. e. the Father is God, not excluding the Son, and Holy Ghost ; the Son is God, not excluding the Father, and the Holy Ghost ; the Holy Ghost is God, not excluding the Father, and the Son. As our Body is the Man, not excluding the Soul ; our Soul is the Man, not excluding the Body.* But it is most plain, that neither the Body nor the Soul is the Man ; and *as plain* is it upon this Notion, that neither the Father, Son, or Holy Ghost, are God ; they are only *those Essences* which constitute that Being who is God ; just as the Body and Soul constitute that Being which is Man. We cannot, upon this Notion, call the Father, or the Son, or the Holy Ghost, in their distinct Essences, God, any otherwise than a Part is called the Whole, that is figuratively. We cannot call any One of the Three Persons God, till we change our Conception of them, as Three distinct Essences, into One entire Essence : And therefore none of the Three Essences, but a Fourth Essence, resulting from the Union of the Three, is the Divine Nature. And here we may take notice, that it is the Fourth Essence that understands and wills, or else it is not God at all that understands and wills ; and that there are Four Persons in God, or else the *entire Essence*, as they call it, of God, is no Person at all.

VI. Because there is *nothing of it in all God's Word, but much there to the contrary.* We never read there, that the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, are Three distinct individual Essences ; but on the contrary we read, that *these Three are One* ; that is, One Essence, or Nature,

ture. We never read, that there are Three Essences, or Beings, to make up one JEHOVAH; but we read, that JEHOVAH is *One*. We never read, that God is Two or Three Spirits, but we read, that he is *a Spirit*; * or *One Spirit*. Now here is express Scripture, that God is *a Spirit*, a single Spirit; certainly they contradict this Text, who say, that God is Two or Three Spirits.

VII. I ADD Dr. Calamy's Argument against the Being of more Gods than One; and say, *If there are Three several distinct Essences, or Natures, in God, either they have the same Excellences, or different Excellencies, by which they are discriminated from each other. If their Excellencies are exactly the same, they, all joined together, could do no more than One alone: And why then should there be a Number? And to suppose different Excellencies in the Divine Nature, is absurd; because, that is what it is necessarily: And what necessarily is what it is, leaves no room for Variety.*† This Argument lets us see, that there is no Necessity at all for Three distinct Essences, in order that the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, may answer the Parts and Purposes, severally assigned them by the Scripture, in the Christian Oeconomy. For certainly an infinite Being is equal to the Whole of the Work, and more Beings added to him can do no more than he alone. *In the One Divine Essence, or Nature, there is Father, Lord, and Spirit, from whom are all Operations, Ministries, and Gifts.* ‡ So that there needs not a Multiplication of Essences, that the great Works of Creation, Redemption and Salvation, be effected by Father, Son, and Spirit, but a true modal Distinction in the One Divine Nature, or Essence. Hence 'tis evident, the Orthodox cannot be justly charged with *Tritheism*; for they hold that God is One Essence, One divine infinite Nature, and no more. With no more Justice or Reason can they be charged with *Sabellianism*; for they hold, that there are Three Subsistences, or Persons, in the Divine

* Joh. iv. 24.
Pag. 258.

† Sermons on the Trinity, p. 233.

‡ Ibid.

Nature ; whereas the *Sabellians* hold, there is but One Person, but *One Subsistence, sustaining the Names, or Appearances, or Manifestations, of Three Persons.* * The Orthodox never say, that a Divine Person is a bare Name, or Manifestation, or a meer Mode : But that it is the Divine Essence, or Nature, with a particular Manner of Subsistence ; or the Godhead, with a relative or individual Property : They abhor both *Tritheism* and *Sabellianism*, and whatever is unbecoming, or dishonourable to, the Divine Essence, or its Manner of subsisting. Now, after all, when Mr. Bennet says, *Men may be equally sincere, equally pious and good, and equally accepted of God, notwithstanding their different Sentiments in this Controversy* ; if he means, what to me he seems to mean, to wit, that Men are equally sincere, equally pious and good, and equally accepted of God, those who deny the true, proper, and absolutely eternal Godhead of Christ, and the Holy Ghost, as well as those who believe it ; those who make Three Essences in God, and so destroy the Unity of the Godhead, as well as those who believe God is but One living and true God, but One Essence ; it looks as if they might be sincere, good, and accepted of God, who destroy the Foundations both of revealed and natural Religion. And therefore I hope Mr. Bennet sees not, that this is the Consequence of what he writes, though it appears evident to others to be so : Or, that he will readily correct this horrid Assertion.

MR. Bennet's Tenth and Last Proposition, which is *Catholicism*, calls upon us to take great Heed lest we be deceived by it. We must not stretch that big Word to the full Extent of it ; for if we do, I think we shall find neither the Word nor Thing in all the BIBLE. Whatever some may include in Catholicism, let us not include in it, such as pretend to enquire sincerely into the Truth of the Gospel, and yet reject it ; nor such as pretend to retain Fundamentals, while they fix for Fundamentals whatever they please ; nor such as pretend to be pious and good, and accepted of God, while the

* *Stillingsfleet's Vindication of the Trinity*, p. 75.

whole Course of their Lives evidence their Insincerity : But let our Catholicism, if we must use that Word, include in it, those, and only those, who believe the Gospel-Revelation, retain the Fundamentals laid down there, such as the Unity of the Godhead, the true and proper Divinity of Christ, and the Holy Ghost, and such like ; and manifest, that they do this in Sincerity and Truth, by an holy Life, and heavenly Conversation. Let us love and unite with a peculiar People, who are zealous of good Works. This hath been God's constant Method, as we learn from his Word. He never set his Love upon any, or chose any, because they were more in Number than any People, for they were the fewest of all People. He was still for a peculiar select Number, and so must we be, if we would love none as Brethren, but such as God loves, and takes into his special Favour. And to be sure, this is the Catholicism, by which will accrue many Advantages to the Churches of Christ, and to living Religion. It will promote Truth as well as Peace ; and contribute to the Improvement of all necessary Knowledge : It is the only firm Bottom to raise true Church Discipline upon. Yet how we can come to this Catholicism, or any Part of it, unless we may, *not with an Air of Imperiousness demand*, as Mr. Bennet hints, p. 109. but with all Seriousness and Humility enquire, or ask, what their Faith is whom we would own as Brethren ? May we hereupon take for Brethren in the Lord, willingly, such as have denied the Lord ? Is this the Way, to persuade Persons to retain Fundamentals, never to enquire whether they believe them or no ? We would not think our selves *much more concerned about Men's Opinions, than their Practices ; about the Orthodoxy of the Head, than of the Heart and Life* : But we think we should be sincerely and earnestly concerned about both ; about the one *as well as* the other. Men who think, that, whatever Pretences are made for Holiness of Heart and Life, there is no true Holiness in either, whilst Faith in Christ is wanting, think it necessary to exhort unto Faith in the first Place, as that noble Grace from which all good Works flow. The above-mention'd Catholicism has this other Excellency in it ; that it will put an effectual Stop to all that Free, *i. e.* impious Thinking, which is so much in Fashion

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in this wild roving Age. The Free-Thinking of this Day lies mainly in thinking divine infallible Truths into meer Uncertainties; plain Expressions in God's Word into Darknes and Confusion; and in Thinking one Thing into any Thing, or every Thing, or nothing at all. Then a Man thinks freely in the Account of some, when he thinks One God into Three distinct Essences; and thinks away the Godhead of Christ Jesus, and the Holy Ghost; and cannot think at all that they are One God with the Father. Then he thinks freely, when he thinks that there is no need of the Ministry of God's Word; but thinks it one of his bright Performances to ridicule that; that there is no need of the Sacraments of Baptism, or the Lord's Supper, but thinks how conveniently he can sleight and oppose both. He's a clever Thinker, in the Esteem of Free-Thinkers, who thinks there is no Necessity at all for a Divine Revelation. The Free-Thinking of our Day is perfect Infidelity; and Men cannot be said to have a Liberty to think freely, with some Men, till they have themselves made Infidels, till they think they ought to believe nothing is certain that God has said in his Word. The Free-Thinking in Vogue is chiefly levell'd against divine Determinations, against the unalterable Truths in God's Word: For because Men will not be bounded by these, they give Rope-Length to their shackled Musings, and let them fly and rove just as they will; and whatever they light on, right or wrong, true or false, it must be right and true, because it is the pretty pleasing Product of their own dear Free-Thinking. But, alas! will vain Man never be wise? What would he think? Is not God's Truth a Boundary to him? Certainly divine Truth is one and the same in all Ages of the World, let dark and sinful Man think as he will. Scripture-Sense is unalterable, though our Thoughts should be tossed to and fro with every Wind of Doctrine. For vain Man to set his Thoughts at Liberty, and let them take their Fling in divine Truth, as if that was an unfixed Thing, is not only Scepticism, but Atheism: It makes the eternal Truths of God as fickle and uncertain, as the wild and giddy Imaginations of sinful Men: This looks as if we had no God to govern our Thoughts, no Rule to submit them to, no Judgment at all by which to account for them. Had learned

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Luther been for such a Liberty of Thinking, in all Likelihood, we had yet been in Popish Darkness, or worse. But his Way of Thinking was the quite contrary. He broke off from this rambling Way of Thinking, whereby the Word of God is subjected to the Fancies of Men, and made a meer Nose of Wax; and corrected his own erring Thoughts, by the fixed and plain Truths in Holy Writ. Had our Reformers Way of Thinking been no clearer, than some Men's, upon some Texts of Scripture, particularly that, *This is my Body*, we might indeed have been to this Day bowing down to a Wafer, or saying at the holy Ordinance, *This is my Body*, without having any Sense or Meaning of it at all. If the above-said Liberty and Freedom, be what the ingenious Writer, Mr. *Bennet*, mentions, p. 104. pleads for, when he pleads, *That learned Men may have full Liberty to study the Scriptures freely and impartially*, p. 30. it is a most woful Liberty of Thinking indeed. That Author says, p. 29. *You see a present Example in the great BENTLY: What a Reputation has he acquired, by the noble Edition he has given us of HORACE? &c. But had the same Genius, the same Sagacity and Labour, been applied to the Study of the Scriptures, &c.** What does this Author mean? Does he think that Men, though never so learned, may play their Wit upon the Word of God, as they may do upon the vain and frothy Fancies of Men? May they correct and change, add to, or take away from, the Canon of Holy Writ, as they may do from the insignificant Matters in *Virgil* or *Horace*? What, will these Men prepare us a noble Edition of the Bible also? Or [rather, does not some Men's desired Liberty of Thinking look, as they would have Liberty to think out for us a new Bible? This Author should consider, that, though a Right to study and judge of the Scriptures for our selves is a Protestant Principle, yet a Liberty to contradict the Scriptures, or turn them, like a Nose of Wax, which way we please, is the Papists Way of Thinking and Refining Things. Therefore he

* Difficulties which attend the Study of the Scripture.

should have advised his *Young Clergyman* to have turn'd Papist, and, as a Popish Priest, he may have Liberty to think the Scriptures into a Contradiction, not only to Protestantism, but also to his own Sense and Reason. But if the Papists should be so severe and unmannerly, as to lay some Restraints upon him, concerning the Unity of the Godhead, the eternal Godhead of Christ, and the Holy Ghost, he must advise him to turn *Deist*, or *Mahometan*, as a proper Way to deliver him from that old, settled, restrained, scanty Way of Thinking they judge the Scriptures oblige us to. They that would think as God would have them, must think according to the Rules he, in his Word, has prescribed them; they must think on divine Truth just as it is laid down in Holy Scripture, and no otherwise. God's Word is, at least it should be, the Boundary of our Thoughts. O that it may be so!

BUT, to conclude, I have been longer in these Hints than I thought on: They were drawn up especially for the Use of the common well-meaning Reader, for the true, plain, and honest Believer, who might easily be confused, or led into Error, by some Things delivered in Mr. *Bennet's IRENICUM*. I hope I have not taken the Work out of abler Hands; for there is yet much left for such to do. If what I have here done may be useful, to *preserve* any one from the sly Insinuations and sophistical Cavils of erroneous Men, or to *recover* any who are fallen from the Truth, or to *prevent* any ready to forsake it, or to *strengthen* the Faith of any in the Unity of the Godhead, and the real eternal Godhead of the Son, and Holy Ghost, I have my End in writing it: And heartily wish that the Praise of all may be given to FATHER, SON, and HOLY GHOST, the One, Only, Living and True GOD. *Amen.*

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